

Health Watch -- Why Not a Mammogram?

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Why aren't some women getting the mammograms they need to protect their health?

Doctors recommend annual screening mammograms for women over 40, but many women don't get these exams. In the United States, minority groups are less likely to have screening mammograms. Recent studies found that this wasn't necessarily for economic reasons. The women who avoided mammograms tended to have certain attitudes about breast cancer that kept them from getting the exams.

Women who believed that breast cancer was caused by a bruise or a sore were unlikely to get mammograms. Another common attitude was the belief that breast cancer treatment is worse than the disease itself.

Doctors at UT Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas say regular mammograms and early detection are what can make treatment for breast cancer less difficult. Dr. Phil Evans, director of [UT Southwestern's Center for Breast Care](#), says with early detection, cancer may be treated just by removing the lump, with perhaps some radiation treatment. Chemotherapy, with all the side effects that patients dread -- like hair loss -- may not be necessary.

It's when cancer goes undetected longer and is more advanced that more serious treatment is required. Treatment then may require mastectomy – the removal of the breast – and chemotherapy or radiation.

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